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BAY-LEAVES

A Sketch

BAY LEAVES

By

FANNY D. SWEENY

With Drawings By

VERNON HOWE BAILEY

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BAY LEAVES.

A world of marsh that borders a world of sea,
Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the shimmering band
Of the sand-beach, fastens the fringe of the marsh to the folds of the land.

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How ample the marsh, and the sea, and the sky!
A league and a league of marsh grass, waist high, broad in the blade,
Stretch leisurely off in a pleasant plain, to the terminal blue of the main.
Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal sea?
Somehow my soul seems suddenly free from the weighing of fate.

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Ye marshes, how candid and simple, and nothing-withholding, and free;
Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains, and the sun,
Ye spread and span like the catholic man who hath mightily won
God out of knowledge, and good out of infinite pain.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh; lo, out of his plenty the sea
Pours fast, full soon the time of the flood-tide must be;
Look how the grace of the sea doth go
About and about through the intricate channels that flow
Here and there,
Everywhere—
Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks and the low-lying lanes,
And the marsh is washed with a million veins,
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow,
In the rose and silver evening glow.

Sidney Lanier.

BAY LEAVES.

"AN Island always pleases my imagination, even the smallest, as a small continent and integral portion of the globe. Even a bare, grassy isle which I can see over at a glance has some undefined and mysterious charm for me."

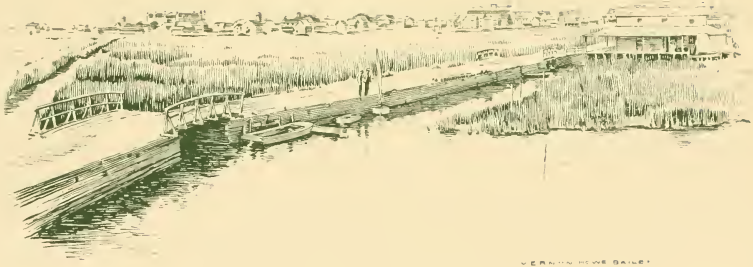
So felt one of Nature's enthusiasts, and so must it have seemed to the man whose rugged face is pictured here.

This pioneer, Thomas Bond, has been but one of many that have found this narrow strip of shining sand, with its meadows stretching to the bay, a restful place, and can say, "Here give me health and a day and I make the pomp of emperors ridiculous."

A bare, grassy isle in truth, but the weeds have virtues to be given to those that seek, and it is gain "to win the secret of a weed's plain heart."

We may think, as did David Copperfield on his visit to Yarmouth, "If the world was really as round as his geography book said, how any part of it came to be so flat."

The island is separated from "the main" by a strong arm of the sea, as if Ocean jealously guarded the lonely land in its orphanage. From remote time,



known, but unsought, unappreciated, it has rested between the bay and the ocean.

Its long stretches of meadow, the haunt of the wild-fowl, and Nature's wild music, the scream of birds, the wailing of the winds, and the "roar of waters steady, deep, and strong," the only harmonies.

This long, low, seemingly barren isle, plain, with no distinction, has fascinations. Yes, sphinx-like, she hath her riddle to be read, and we it is that lack both open eye and ear. But, some day, when we stand, with only sky, and wave, and shore, "bathed in the blithe air and uplifted by infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes," and the secret is ours.

Color, form, and sound, will reveal to us their myriad beauty, and we will know that Nature's

manuscript may be read here as clearly and as deeply as in any other place.

She melted into purple cloud,
She silvered in the moon,
She spired into a yellow flame,
She flowered in blossom red,
She floweth into a foaming wave.

This green ribbon of land called "Long Beach" rises scarcely above the sea, except for the dunes of sand stretching from Brigantine to Barnegat. A weak sea-wall against the waters that beat with bitter force along twenty miles of coast line. Here upon the outlying shore lurk hidden dangers, here are tossed the gifts of sea and shell, and, upon the high billows, sometimes is brought a sad freightage, which brave men strive in vain to rescue and give back to life. When the stroller, on a fair day, looking towards Barnegat, sees the mirage near the coast, the thought comes of the forces of nature surrounding the treacherous shore, to warn or lure?

In marked contrast to the sublime sea, with its untamable strength, is the serene beauty of the bay. Looking to the west as the sun retires into its "tent

of dropping clouds," one has a vision of wonderful color, and we know that the beauty of the landscape is *our* inheritance. Each foot of soil, as some one says, may have its "warranty deed," strong and true, but this all-pervading beauty is mine, is yours.

The land is not barren, a mere sandy beach. The surface is covered with vegetation, except a marginal line of white, shining sand, whose brilliancy has been commented upon as unusual.

The Bay-berry covers the soil from sea to meadow; countless swallows, garrulous beneath their roof of bay, make these bushes their resting place. The uprising of these birds in the early morning, with their swift, glancing wings cut against the sky, make a line picture of singular beauty. That

sovereign naturalist, Dr. Leidy, who knew of the rich botanical resources of this little isle as no one else, would have named the bay-berry, or candle-berry as it is called further south, a species of the wax-myrtle. The same plant, Kalm informs us, from the berries

of which the early settlers obtained a wax to make candles and an agreeable-smelling soap.

Thoreau says that in Beverley's "History of Virginia," published in 1705, mention is made of the myrtle, and how the settlers made a hard, brittle wax from it:

"Of this they make candles which are never greasy to the touch, nor melt with lying in the hottest weather, neither does the snuff of them ever offend the smell like that of a tallow candle, but, instead of being disagreeable, it yields a pleasant fragrance to all that are in the room, insomuch that nice people often put them out on purpose to have the incense of the expiring snuff!"

The bay bushes have such a sturdy quality, that no burning of the undergrowth, or cutting to the

earth, will eradicate them. When the leaves and tender shoots are bruised, the stimulating fragrance suggests the odor of the West India Bay.

From early spring until late autumn some flower with new beauty may be found, many nameless to the chance stroller, others favorites of all time. The briar-rose making the wayside glow, the primrose and the pink stars of the sebacea covering the meadow-land. A wild garden from which one may choose their favorite. Here, in the shadow of the dune, resting under the wide-spreading branches of the wild-plum, laden with its many-tinted fruit, one may stretch out their hand and gather roses, the lilies not far away. Near, in a nook, is a pool of water, clear and sweet, bordered by the golden rod, the iris, and many a tiny flower. In the distance,

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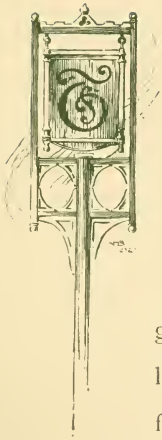
on the west, is the shore-line; between are miles of rippling tinted waters, with the yachts (lacking only in picturesqueness the coloring of the sails of foreign boats) seeking blue inlets, and with their crews of merry men finding fast the riches for which the bay is noted.

Who would sigh for another scene, but the restless, discontented one, or the one who is unwilling to fling the load of custom down, "like drift-weed on the sand-slopes brown."

We may eat the lotus here if we wish,

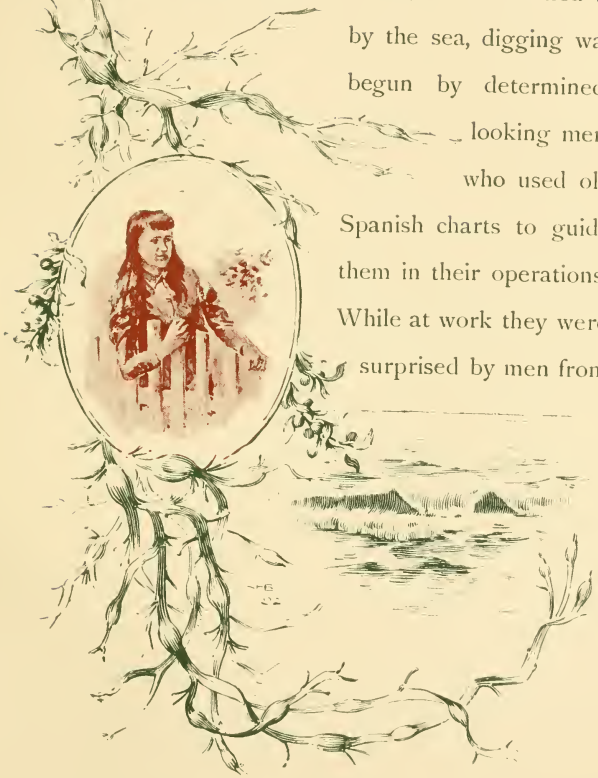
> "Where the soft, spreading down
> Sinks away to the sea,
> That has crept from the lea;
> Crept so quiet and slow,
> That the marsh scarce can know
> Be it water or land,
> So thick the reeds stand.

"And the great crimson sun
Drops slow down the sky,
Where vast meadows lie
Washed warm in the flush;
There, through the world's hush,
Earth's sweet, solemn speech
Our faint sense may reach,
With its tale of one more day's fate done."



HIS locality has its stories. One gifted with the keenness of insight and the simplicity of style that such work needs, may here find materials for character study. The flotsam of the sea, a suggestive of histories that require but little imagination to weave them into forms both weird and sad.

There are even tales of buried treasure. Several years ago, near the "Three Cedars," the point where



the old inlet used to exist, but now filled in by the sea, digging was begun by determined-looking men, who used old Spanish charts to guide them in their operations. While at work they were surprised by men from

"Bond's Life-Saving Station," and hastily left, leaving an old sword, which showed that it had been taken from the earth but recently. But for this fact one might believe the story a myth.

No deed of sea-king can be told and verified, but there are many oft-related tales of the lawless

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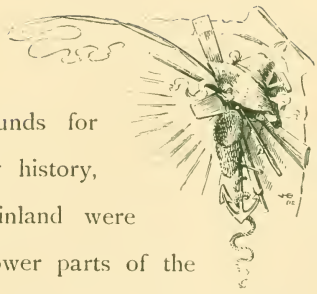
operations on the Barnegat shores in past years. Wrecks were then frequent, and spoils from heavily-freighted ships most valuable. Now the Light-House, one of the best equipped on the Atlantic Coast, and the "Life-Saving Stations," at distances of five miles, give protection.

One creature, sole survivor from an ill-fated vessel, deserves to have an item of notice. This

lonely kitten, from the far-off "Isle of Man," was found clinging to a spar one early morning after a

storm. But this is "a tale that cannot be told;" the absence of tail proved her pedigree, and her descendants, canny Manx cats, with tortoise-shell markings, are found in many places on the island.



This little isle has for many years formed the happy hunting grounds for sportsmen. In its early history, the deer from the mainland were tracked across the shallower parts of the bay and there captured. The larger game has long since ceased to exist; but the sport afforded by both water and marsh for fishing and gunning is still as great, and added to this is the deep-sea fishing, that most exciting of sports.

Here the blue-fish, at certain seasons, are caught in quantities, and one cannot but speculate, if the effort and appliances were greater, a Beach Haven blue-fish might become as well known as a Yarmouth bloater. Thousands of this most edible fish are caught without effort.

In the case of the Yarmouth and Scotch fisheries, according to statistics, there are more than one thousand vessels and eight thousand men employed, and the nets used by the combined fisheries are long enough to reach from Liverpool to New York four times. Neither the herring nor the mackerel is superior to the blue-fish properly prepared, and although the supply in the case of this fish would never be as great, yet its superior quality might yet make it a limited industry.

But why suggest industry; seemingly there is no need. All wants may be supplied without great effort, and labor, with its primeval curse, may be thought of as not existing. Here Nature spreads a dainty table for man's physical needs, and one may only spend a June or a September to find the higher wants of his being in their fullness, and realize the gracious bounty of this little isle, giving of "her wealth, which is health."

THE OUTLYING COAST OF NEW JERSEY.

NORTH
Philadelphia.
New York
Toms River
Island Heights
Barnegat Bay
Manahawkin
Barnegat Light
Barnegat City
Harvey Cedars
L.S. Station
Peahale
L.S. Station
Berkeley Seaside Park
Lavelette
Manasquan
Manasquan Inlet
Spring Lake
Sea Girt
Ocean Beach
Asbury Park
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Deal Beach
Elberon
Long Branch
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